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ABSTRACT

To determine how bilingual children display a sense of story in an oral reading activity at home, researchers video- and audio-taped samples of four bilingual Chicano second grade chidren engaged in matched narrative tasks. While the two male and two female children read aloud storybooks in English and Spanish in the home setting, reseachers focused on their presentation of story content, projection and control of the social role of story reader, and accuracy of story delivery. In particular they concentrated on the children's perspective strategies (how the children organized and coordinated the social act of story reading by manipulating the perspective of their speech and how this helped audience perception) and contextualization cues (how the children manipulated intonation, prosody, stress, and gesture to assist the listener's reception of an intended message). The children apparently followed general plans or "scripts" for how to go about reading to an audience and individual children seemed to exercise some regularity of style in oral reading. The perspective strategies used by the children in oral reading were related to their personalities, their English or Spanish fluency, and the characteristics of the setting and the texts. Plans for continuing research are included. (SB)

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FINAL REPORT

National Institute of Education
Grant NIE-G-81-0126

ORGANIZATION OF CHICANO CHILDREN'S NARRATIVE BEHAVIOR

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Educational Testing Service
Princeton, New Jersey
August 1983

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Abstract

Four Chicano bilingual children were videotaped in a home setting performing delivery of three types of narratives over a three year period. Children were enrolled in a second- through fourth-grade bilingual program over the three year period of observation. Two male and two female children were observed. The present project conducted during the last year of observation summarized changes in children's English and Spanish narrative performance across all three years of data collection. Special attention was given to oral reading of storybooks in Spanish and English in a home setting. Children's performance was analyzed in terms of communicative strategies used in oral reading; attention was also given to errors or miscues in children's reading.

The study was conducted from a field work perspective resembling ethnography. Children's narrative performance was contextualized in terms of the characteristics of children's community, family, and school life. Videotaped data of children's classroom interaction were also examined. One of the bilingual teachers of the children and the head of the children's bilingual program assisted in interpretation of the data and in drawing out implications for data regarding the classroom adjustment of the children.

The results of data interpretation showed that changes in children's Spanish and English narrative skill were influenced by changes in their proficiency in Spanish and English and by their home, community and school adjustment. Over the course of the study, all four children displayed loss of skills in Spanish and an increase of skills in English as evidenced by analysis of their narrative performance. During the first two years of observation, performance in Spanish in some cases was more fluent and accurate than performance in English. Three of the four children in the first and second grade clearly were* aided by their bilingual program. It permitted them to exercise language skills in their more familiar language in activities that helped teach them about literacy; this exposure acted as a foundation for their future academic growth. Loss of skills in Spanish seemed to occur because the second and third grade bilingual program deemphasized the use of Spanish. While all children showed growth in the narrative skills in English over the three year course of observation, there was evidence that two children were beginning to fall noticeably behind in their class standing as reflected by their CAT scores and by reports from their teachers. The other two remaining children displayed an opposite pattern of school adjustment.

The activities of the present project led to development of a schema theory analysis of how children internalize cognitive models of their literacy performance and its connections to their self-identity. This theory was useful in accounting for differences in children's narrative performance and also in analyzing the implications of these performances for children's ongoing school and personal adjustment.

Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, in press.

Cognitive Theory and Chicano Children's Oral Reading Behavior

Richard P. Duran

Educational Testing Service

The research on Chicano children's discourse behavior described in this paper stems from an ongoing project supported by ETS and NIE.[1] The work has involved collecting naturalistic discourse data in Spanish and English from four 7 to 10 year old Chicano children as they interact with teachers and other students at school, and with parents and other children at home. In this work our research team is interested in studying how bilingual children's knowledge of a social speech situation and a speech activity affects the way they communicate, particularly, how they deploy various strategies to sustain interaction with others. We want our descriptive accounts and analyses of speech behavior to capture evidence of how children understand the demands and constraints of interaction and how they accommodate their speech and accompanying behavior in a way that is revealing of their communicative competence. We believe that one important key to our understanding of children's oral behavior is sensitivity to the range and character of different kinds of knowledge that children might bring to bear in control of their interaction and communication with others and how this knowledge is used to guide speech and interaction as other participants perceive it. In effect we are suggesting that an enhanced understanding of the nature of communicative competence is enabled by looking at how children's knowledge about how to communicate stems from both sociocultural and cognitive sources. By suggesting a more cognitive orientation to the study of communicative competence (without diminishing the

fundamental improvisational nature of social communication and social structure) we may be capable of better understanding how it is that individual children learn to use language in the early school years and how their style of communication grows, develops and is accommodated to the learning and literacy contexts faced in school. In this regard, elementary school children's oral reading of stories, for example, represents a significant communicative activity which is a precursor to extended literacy development. In the oral story-reading contexts we are studying, children are required to understand the individual words and sentences in a story as they read them and as they cohere as a narrative. They are further required to "tell a story" as they read it. This "telling of a story" as it is read builds on children's knowledge of what stories are like, given their genre. It also builds on knowledge that children have about sociocultural conventions in story telling and on knowledge about the sociocultural characteristics of the audience toward which they are directing their oral reading. An additional, but very basic and necessary kind of knowledge concerns how to improvise an activity of "story telling" as it fits within the everyday, unpredictable exigencies which underlie any real discourse context. In particular, children's knowledge of what social structures are possible within a discourse setting and what the proxemic and social characteristics of a context are like as it evolves, affects the way they proceed in a task such as an oral reading of a story. Thus, the overall activity of oral story-reading is complicated in terms of the knowledge forms required to accomplish the activity. Since oral reading of stories assumes a social context and social contract for communication, the accompanying speech and paralinguistic signals serve to signal many different forms of information required to establish and

regulate the conduct of oral reading as a social activity and as a simultaneous referential communication activity.

Before describing our own work, it will be useful to mention a few previous studies of minority or Hispanic children's discourse which have guided our own efforts. Also we will be mentioning some recent work by cognitive scientists and sociolinguists which has introduced the notion of "scripts" to describe knowledge structures that hypothetically underlie peoples' ability to recognize social contexts and to use language in recurrent social contexts. It is our present contention that children's acting-out of scripts, plots or plans for speaking in social contexts that have a recognizable order and structure, show that children rely in a strategic fashion on their linguistic and sociolinguistic repertoires when enacting a speech activity. In our work on Chicano children's narrative delivery we will point out some ways in which these connections can be made.

Some Relevant Research

By now a fairly substantial number of research studies in the ethnography of communication on minority and other children's communicative competence have documented the common-sense expectation that children's skill in communication is dramatically affected by the participant structure, the setting, and the nature of speech events. Here, we will just mention three studies which are relevant to our own work rather than overview this work in detail.

Perhaps the best known ethnographic study of cultural influences on ethnic minority children's discourse behavior was done by Philips (1972). She found

that Native-American children from the Warm Springs Indian reservation in central Oregon were reluctant to answer their teachers' questions publicly in the classroom, but these same children were found to interact actively with others in group classroom activities. Philips' research on the communication structure and patterns of children outside the classroom revealed that the Native-American children in question have norms for communication which make public question-answering inappropriate based on a norms for question-answering learned in home and community settings. In addition, it was found that Native-American children preferred to interact with other children rather than with adults, who imposed their own rules for communication.

Philips developed the notion of participant structure to refer to the ways teachers organized verbal interaction with students. The term "participant structure" has since come to refer more generally to the ways of speaking and interacting shared among interlocutors in a setting and speech activity.

The importance of participant structure in ethnic minority children's successful conduct of reading tasks is highlighted in the research of Au (1980), on the effectiveness of KEEP (Kamehameha Early Education Program) in Hawaii. In this program, first through third grade children of native Hawaiian descent are taught reading in small groups of 4-6 children seated around a teacher. A significant part of each reading lesson involves the teacher allowing and encouraging children to break into the stream of conversation about a storybook when they have something to contribute to what the adult or another child is saying. Anthropological and linguistic research on native Hawaiian cultural practices suggests that informal group interaction in reading lessons is educationally successful for children with Hawaiian backgrounds because it resembles the

cultural storytelling practices of Hawaiian adults. While the structure of KEEP reading lessons, and the reading curriculum as a whole, is much more complicated than described above, there is substantial evidence that the KEEP children are more willing participants and effective learners in reading lessons because they can draw on their own cultural and social resources for communication.

The research of Au (1980) is significant to our own research in that it suggests that there are distinguishable patterns of social participation in enactment of oral reading. In the resulting joint patterns of participation, KEEP children assume distinguishable functions and roles in contributing to a story. In a sense, the school activity of a reading lesson is orchestrated around socially shared patterns of participation which occur improvisationally and which tend to be distributed differently according to the major parts of a reading lesson activity.

The effect of participant structure on Hispanic children's discourse behavior with school related tasks is highlighted in the ethnographic work of Carrasco, Vera and Cazden (1981). These researchers found that a second grade bilingual child, Veronica, exhibited a dramatic difference in fluency in describing knowledge of a language-arts spelling task when she answered questions about the lesson put to her by her teacher as opposed to when she engaged in a peer-tutoring sequence with a male Chicano student. When interrogated by the teacher, Veronica elaborated very little about the purpose and nature of the spelling task; furthermore, her responses in English were ungrammatical, leading the teacher to infer that Veronica was unskilled as a speaker as well as uninformed about the lesson.

In contrast, in the peer-tutoring sequence, Veronica was found to be highly fluent in teaching the language-arts spelling task in question to another student. In this sequence, Veronica displayed a thorough knowledge of the task she was teaching, and knowledge of how to maintain the role of teacher when distractions intervened. Her communicative effectiveness was marked particularly by her use and timing of directives, such as requests to spell a word and to pronounce it in English. Her use of directives was also accompanied by paralinguistic cues involving stress and intonation which helped strengthen the force of her commands when they were not initially obeyed. In addition, Veronica's tone or key of discourse delivery displayed elements which could only be recognized by a child from a similar Hispanic background. This was exemplified on one occasion when Veronica gently chided her tutee for being "dumb" or mentally slow using an idiomatic expression in Spanish. She delivered the expression with appropriate stress and intonation, emulating an adult's gentle and affectionate chiding of a child.

The three examples of ethnographic research which we have cited suggest to us that the display of children's sociolinguistic repertoires is intimately linked with the participant structure of a communicative activity. We believe that central to children's control and improvisational use of their linguistic and sociolinguistic repertoires is their knowledge of the activity types within which language is used, coupled with their knowledge of how to draw effectively on their speaking ability as activities evolve and shift.

Recent research in cognitive science and sociolinguistics suggests some ways in which we might describe knowledge of activities and participant structures from a psychological viewpoint.

Freedle and Duran (1979), Nelson and Gruendel (1979), and Corsaro (in press) have suggested that children's knowledge of activities in which speech occurs might be represented by knowledge structures activated from memory which we term "scripts."[2] A script represents knowledge of a network of possible major subactions or "scenes" which make up a larger culturally salient activity such as reading from a story book, participating in a birthday party, etc. Scripts identify culturally normed ways of acting in situations that are salient in and of themselves as recurrent activities within a socio-cultural setting and community. Apart from the scenes or major subactions which a script specifies, there are other components of a script which describe: the roles and relationships of people within scenes; the environmental objects that are relevant as "props" within scenes; the "track" or specific version of a script--as, for example, child versus adult birthday party; the conditions in the social or personal world which signal the start of a script; and the social or personal conditions which signal the ending or closing of a script. Freedle and Duran (1979), Nelson and Gruendel (1979), and Corsaro (in press) also suggest that scripts, as knowledge structures, may contain information about how communicative interchanges occur among script participants. Knowledge about how communication occurs in a script refers to the sociolinguistic repertoire that is expected of participants in a script. Thus, in the oral reading of a story there is a general assumption, in our U.S. classroom culture, that a reader has the floor and will read a story directed towards an audience that consists of other children who are passive listeners. Listeners are expected to evidence signs of attending and listening to the story reader, yet the teacher is free to interrupt or change the course of a child's reading.

The notion of a script as a knowledge structure reflecting people's understanding of activities is not adequate, in and of itself, to fully explain how people actually interact in any setting. Sociolinguists such as Gumperz (1981), Erickson and Shultz (1980), Bennett (1980), Gumperz and Tannen (1978), and Erikson (1980) have pointed out that oral communication in a setting has an intrinsic improvisational quality which cannot be reduced to a simple plan of how to say what, when. The immediate characteristics of speech in a setting are the result of locally negotiated relationships among speakers, and exigencies that arise as communication proceeds can dramatically affect ongoing discourse. Nonetheless, within the confines of an activity such as oral story-reading we would expect a story reader to behave as if he or she had a "sense of story reading" in an activity that would make some strategies of discourse more likely than others. In our work on Chicano children's discourse, we ask how a child is able to display a "sense of story" to others in an oral reading activity at home. We here borrow the term "sense of story" from a recent paper on this topic by Cook-Gumperz and Green (1981). In our concern with a "sense of story reading" in addition to a sense of story content, we are interested in the story reader's projection and control of the social role of story reader as well as story delivery in terms of the accuracy of oral performance vis-a-vis the text being read. In looking closely at repeated oral story-reading performance by the same child, we hope to learn how to describe an individual child's sociolinguistic repertoire in terms of redundancies or systematic differences that tend to occur across different story reading occasions. Our belief is that children mentally store and subsequently rely on strategies for communicating in particular ways that fit their identification of an activity and audience for which such strategies are useful.

In our videotaped data and accompanying observational field notes of Chicano children's oral reading we are presently focusing on identification of strategies of two general sorts. The first general strategy concerns how children organize and coordinate the social act of story reading by manipulating the perspective or point-of-view of their speech, and how this strategic use of perspective aids in audience perception of a story's content. We have adapted our own notion of perspective from theoretical work in discourse analysis by Bennett (1981) and Fillmore (1974). In examining the perspectives projected in children's oral reading we are attending to features such as the following:

- o reading from an omniscient perspective assumed in the text of a narrative.
- o embellishing a story by introducing information not stated in the story text.
- o quoting story characters, as evidenced by emulation of a character's intonation and prosody.
- o interrupting the reading of a story to request reading help from the audience.
- o stepping outside of the role of text-reader to help an audience in its understanding of a story, as in the display of a story picture.
- o stepping outside of the role of story narrator to manage an audience by, for example, requesting attentive behavior.

The foregoing perspectives are merely exemplary. Other strategic ways of projecting story reading or story content to an audience are conceivable. We

are attempting to identify the range of perspectives evidenced by children over repeated occasions of oral story-reading. The central point of our approach to perspective and perspective shifts is that we can identify molar units of speech activity according to the perspective that a child maintains and changes as he or she reads. These molar units arise and shift improvisationally as a child enacts parts of a story-reading script, with certain perspectives and perspective shifts more likely to occur in certain parts of a story-reading script accommodated to an occasion of story reading. One of our present research goals is to develop a profile of recurrent perspective orientations that individual children show in different parts of a story-reading activity. We can thus appreciate the strategic use of perspective by children as it influences their communicative effectiveness as story readers.

The second general set of speech strategies we are investigating are termed "contextualization cues" by Gumperz (1977). Contextualization cues or strategies refer to a speaker's manipulation of intonation, prosody, stress and gesture in speech in order to assist listener's reception of an intended message and its nuances.

Based in part on previous research on narrative delivery by children (Gumperz & Kaltman, 1980; Collins & Michaels, 1980; and Scollon & Scollon, in press a and b) we expect that control of intonation, prosody, stress and gesture during the reading of stories should be used to emphasize: a) important points of information in a story; b) contrasts between omniscient story narration and quotes from story characters; c) rhetorical questions asked of an audience about a story as it is being read; and d) prompting of story audience members to describe the pictures that accompany a story. Note that the execution of strategies involving manipulation of audience perspective by an oral story-reader,

as discussed earlier, creates situations in which strategies involving contextualization cues are likely to be utilized to enable the audience to attend to a new form of message.

The following are examples from our data of children's oral-reading showing use of perspective and use of contextualization cues. The example below comes from a six-year-old child, reading from the omniscient perspective and subsequently shifting to an appeal for help from an audience in reading.

This is George. He lived with his friend the man with the yellow hat.

And was a good little monkey. . . .and he was always. . .

how do we say CURIOSO?

In this example the child begins to read the text of the story in a straightforward fashion, reflecting the omniscient perspective of the author. The underlined portions in the latter part of the example mark points at which the child's speech deviated from the story-book text, either with regard to words uttered or pronunciation of those words. The word "CURIOSO" is capitalized to stress its occurrence in Spanish as opposed to English. The latter portions of the foregoing example illustrate one manner in which a child may appeal for help in oral reading. The child here demonstrates knowledge of what is being read, although utilizing a language system--Spanish--which is different from the language of the text. The example also demonstrates how a child's perception of an informal participant structure occurring in a home setting may allow him or her to request direct help from others to accomplish a reading activity. In our observations of oral story-reading in classroom settings we find that a child's deviation from a text is more often viewed as inappropriate than as part of a potential strategy for learning how to read.

The following discussion examines children's control of oral reading perspective as it co-occurs with the use of contextualization cues. This example of a six year old female quoting a story character shows evidence of control of stress and intonation, conforming to changes in the point of view of the language of the story text.

If you become a mountain climber. . . .

Say the little bunny. . . .I would

be a cracurs in a hidden garden

["Cracurs" is a mispronunciation of "crocus"]

In delivery of the utterances "If you become a mountain climber," and "I would be a cracurs in a hidden garden," the child used a noticeably higher pitch of speech than in delivery of the utterance "say the little bunny." Furthermore, the range of intonational shifts within the two utterances of the quoted speech mentioned above was richer, more melodic and accentuated--like that of animated speech in a conversation in process--than was the case for delivery of the utterance "say the little bunny" which was delivered with a lower pitch and less variant intonation. Shifts in the intonational pitch during reading are suggested by shift up or down in the wavy line drawn beneath the child's utterances. Sudden increases in pitch in the quoted speech coincided with stressed words (underlined), the latter followed by a distinguishable pause before continuation. This example suggests that the child in question

was capable of recognizing a shift in the point-of-view projected in a narrative's text, and using contextualization strategies to communicate this shift in perspective to an audience.

Here is an example of a child stepping outside of the text-reader role to help an audience appreciate a story:

. . . .If you become a sailor boat and sai. . . .sail away from me.

. . . .say his mother. I will become the wind and blow you where I want you to go. . . .This is the picture.

The utterance "This is the picture" which was not in the text was accompanied by a change to a flattened intonation, with a lower pitch and tonal range than the preceding utterances, and also by the physical act of turning the book's picture toward the audience for display.

Finally, here is an example of how a young reader in a story setting might step out of the story-reader role to manage an audience.

. . . .No; Pati, I was reading this. . . .

This comment was uttered by the reader when her younger sister attempted to take away the story book. The utterance was made in a forceful fashion, with more amplitude and stress in delivery than was used in the reading of text.

Our observations of children's oral reading behavior at home and school, and evidence of the sort we have just cited, lead us to believe that the children are following general plans or scripts for how to go about reading to an audience (Duran & Guerra, 1981). These plans or scripts are not strict ones; rather, they are marked by a set of intentions or "plots"--to borrow a term from Fred Erickson--which guide oral reading in a given participant structure. In oral reading as a referential and social activity in U.S. main-

stream culture there is a general agenda of "business at hand" centered on enactment of a sequence of scenes from a reading script which are expected to occur in a fixed order--e.g., beginning a story, reading the body of a story, and ending a story activity. Within each major scene of a reading script, there are both expectations of what is supposed to occur--e.g., sequentially reading aloud story pages to signal the structure and direction of a story; turning storybook pages, etc.--and also options in a story reader's behavior appropriate to an audience and social setting which accompany expected behavior within oral reading scenes. These options are appropriate behaviors for story reading, but are not necessarily an immutable part of a story reading script for a child; furthermore, options may be idiosyncratic to individual children.

An example of how options in story reading occur appears, as cited earlier, in our observation of one child's strategy of turning storybook pictures toward an audience accompanied by a request that the audience look at the picture and its contents. The shift in perspective which this story reader exercised was marked by comments such as "look at the pretty picture," often of a formulaic character, with use of a characteristic intonation and prosody appropriate to utterance of the formula in a story reading setting.

In our observations of children we have found that individual children seem to exercise some regularity of style in oral reading and performance of an oral reading script. We have detected the existence of these styles by repeatedly observing children read a number of story book texts in a home setting and also, to some extent, in a school setting. We have noted that we can isolate certain "habits" of communication which children follow in terms of characteristic shifts in perspective in oral reading and in an accompanying

utilization of familiar types of contextualization cues. Our observations show that, across children, utilization of perspective strategies in oral reading seems to be related both to the children's personalities and to their fluency in Spanish or English as the medium of communication, as well as to the characteristics of settings and texts. At present we hypothesize that children, in their cognitive realization of a participant structure and script for oral reading, also make subconscious decisions about how they project aspects of their own personalities in the act of oral reading. For example, we tend to find that female oral readers rely more on certain shifts in perspective and certain gender-typed contextualization cues than male oral readers.

In passing, individual differences aside, it is essential to point out that children's knowledge of an oral reading script for a genre such as stories, is by no means invariant either across cultures or even within different social groups and settings within the same culture. These caveats for evaluating the generality of findings of work such as ours are brought out well in the research of Scollon and Scollon (in press, a and b) on contrasts between Alaskan Athabascan's perceptions of the organization of story structure versus mainstream U.S. person's perceptions of story structure and story delivery. In addition the ethnographic work of Brice-Heath (in press and 1980) in the black Trackton and white Piedmont communities in Carolina demonstrates that the meaning and function of literacy events is both a community and extended, socioculturally determined phenomena that cannot be interpreted simply from stereotypes for literacy events held in the mind of a highly literate mainstream cultural group. In our own research, issues regarding the

sociocultural and community origin of discourse strategies used by children in oral reading remain an area for our further investigation. In modesty, we must admit that a fuller interpretation of our findings on children's discourse strategies would require a deeper and more intensive analysis of literacy in our children's community than we have resources to allocate in our work; nonetheless to the extent possible we are conducting an informal survey of parent's and children's home, community and school literacy practices.

The plans for pilot research we have described here are longitudinal in nature. At present we have collected video and audio taped samples of four children engaged in matched narrative tasks in each of two successive years, and we are extending our observations into the coming year, when our children will enter a bilingual fourth grade classroom. We have included reports of second grade children's discourse only in this paper.

By studying our longitudinal collection of discourse, accompanying field notes, and field notes on children's home and school social life, we expect to be able to generate case histories describing changes in children's oral reading behavior across three years, commencing with the second grade and ending in the fourth grade of school. Following this strategy, we hope to learn more concretely how children's dual language background and communicative strategies interact and are evidenced in development of their reading literacy skills. A longitudinal course of study seems critical since the story texts which children encounter across school years will differ in their structure and manner of presenting story information. Thus, some of the changes we expect to observe are due to children's cognitive-linguistic development and also due to the text materials they encounter at different age levels.

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FOOTNOTES

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[2]A review of similar approaches to cognitive processes guiding discourse is given as part of a paper by Tannen (1979) which includes discussion of the general relevance of these approaches to adult's oral narrative delivery.